



Construction in progress on the church building, spring 1905. In the top row, right, shovel in hand, is Father Gallagher.

in numbers. The County seat at Batavia was growing rapidly and by 1910, another satellite church had been built. Like its mother parish, St. Philomena, Holy Trinity parish was born of effort and sacrifice.

As early as 1905, a group of Batavia Catholics, led by John Hartman, appealed to Archbishop Moeller to have Mass offered on Sunday in Batavia. As had been the case nearly 70 years earlier at Stonelick, the resource limitations of the Archdiocese led Moeller to regretfully inform the Catholics of Batavia that no priest was available. But Mr. Hartman was not easily dissuaded.

John Hartman had a high school teacher who was, at that time, a Provincial of the Franciscan Order. He contacted Father Chrysostom at the monastery in Oldenberg, Indiana. The Provincial was touched by the sincere appeal of the Batavians, whose weekly journey to St. Philomena or to St. Louis was often made on foot in severe weather, and over roads sometimes impassable. His sympathy for the elderly and the infants during these hardships caused him to offer the services of a Franciscan priest, on the condition that the Archbishop would approve.

Archbishop Moeller did approve the idea, provided that the congregation would "provide a place and make all the preparations." And this they did. One can only imagine the negotiations required to obtain the use of the John Klein Building, now known as the Hugo Building, on Main Street for one year, rent free! The one year became four years, and a visiting Franciscan offered Mass twice per month at that site until 1910.

Again, an anonymous benefactor aided the congregation. This mysterious person and Mr. Wendel Klein arranged for the purchase, from Jude Breving, of a parcel of land at 6th and Wood Streets, the present site of Holy Trinity Church.

The church of the Holy Trinity was dedicated on October 16, 1910. Monsignor John Murray consecrated the new building in "a solemn and glorious celebration." Father Henry Meyer was appointed pastor and, like his successors, commuted to and from St. Philomena at Stonelick. In the best tradition of rural Catholicism, "a fine dinner was served in Klein Hall by the ladies."

Thus, the second parish to spring from the roots so carefully nurtured at Stonelick became a permanent reality. Strong bonds of brotherhood bound the two parishes, continuing to this day. Parishioners are friends, neighbors, and relatives. A common pastorship continues. In later years, demographic trends reversed the roles of the parishes and Batavia became the resident parish of the pastor in 1952. But nowhere do two parishes more eloquently exemplify the oft-used salutation of the Apostle Paul, "my brothers in Christ."



The church completed in 1905.
St. Philomena Parish, Stonelick, Ohio.

Father Meyer turned to advanced technology to help cope with the problems of serving two active and growing parishes, five miles apart, and with a widely scattered population. The old barn at Stonelick was no longer a stable. Instead, it housed a Schacht "horseless carriage." Schacht, based in Cincinnati, was primarily a builder of trucks. Its motor car, high-wheeled and rugged, was well suited to the rough roads of Clermont County and the muddy lanes of his congregation. The "motor age" had dawned in Stonelick Township.

Father Meyer served from 1910 to 1918. Again, war had swept the western world. Adding to the miseries of the nation, severe weather and epidemics plagued the Ohio Valley. Rural Stonelick Township was spared many of the horrors that visited the populous areas of Cincinnati, however, and the toll upon the congregation was not severe.

In 1918, Father Evers was appointed pastor of St. Philomena parish. He was known as a rigid disciplinarian and as an austere personality. The story is told that, at one particular Sunday Mass, two brothers, young men in their teens or early twenties, were acting as servers. Father Evers, displeased with their performance, told them to "get out and never come back." This they did, quite literally. They not only left the building, but the Township, County, and State as well. Whereabouts unknown for some years, they achieved great success in central Illinois, one becoming a prominent veterinarian, the other a prosperous farmer, owning an entire section of some of the most fertile cropland in the United States. As it turned out, Father Evers' advice to the Gomien brothers was fortuitous indeed.

These were years of substantial change in the lifestyle of the parish, and a time of colorful personalities. Another anecdote, concerning William "Uncle Bill" Craver and one of his friends, is as follows: "Uncle Bill" was acting as usher one bright Sabbath morning. In the congregation was his friend, with whom he had spent the previous evening, reportedly until the wee hours of the morning. When "Uncle Bill" passed the collection basket, on its long handle, before his comrade, his friend held his wallet upside-down and shook it, in a good-natured demonstration of poverty.